

# COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIC COMPETENCE OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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**Abstract**— Communicative strategic competence, as identified in several studies, encompasses the utilization of compensatory strategies when encountering challenges in grammar, sociolinguistics, or discourse. Furthermore, strategic competence emphasizes an individual's capacity to modify their verbal and nonverbal communication in order to overcome challenges arising from limited grammar proficiency or unfamiliarity with social and communicative norms. This involves employing strategies to compensate for potential difficulties and ensure effective communication despite these limitations. The study aimed to examine the communicative strategic competence of pre-service teachers. A mixed method was utilized to gather data. The study revealed that pre-service teachers are in the process of developing their communicative strategic competence, showing some understanding but requiring additional support and training to enhance their skills. This implied the need to propose and implement a developmental program to enhance pre-service teachers' communicative strategic competence.

**Keywords:** Communicative Strategic Competence, Communication strategies, English language, Pre-service teachers

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic and evolving landscape of modern education, the role of pre-service teachers as architects of tomorrow's learning experiences cannot be disregarded. As they embark on their journey towards becoming full-fledged educators, equipped with the knowledge and skills imparted through rigorous teacher education programs, the spotlight falls on a pivotal aspect: strategic communicative competence.

Quality pre-service teacher education is crucial for developing effective teachers and improving overall educational outcomes. Research indicates that key factors influencing teacher preparedness include curriculum content, teaching practice, and the relevance of theory to practice (Tasdemir et al., 2020). Interestingly, a number of studies show that pre-service English teacher education programs play a crucial role in shaping teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and skills. These programs can significantly impact pre-service teachers' beliefs about effective language teaching and learning (Singh et al., 2021). Courses focusing on instructional strategies help pre-service teachers integrate critical thinking skills in language instruction, preparing them for 21st-century learning needs (Panganoron-Jabonete, 2022). Implementing a critical, intercultural perspective in language courses allows pre-service teachers to affirm their identities while developing language skills, though it may present challenges (Gutiérrez, 2022). Some programs integrate pedagogical and teaching skills development into English proficiency courses, providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to observe, reflect on, and practice teaching strategies. These approaches aim to better prepare pre-service teachers for their future roles, addressing the need for quality language teachers and effective language programs.

The effectiveness of pre-service teachers in providing quality education is influenced by various factors. The study conducted by Afalla and Fabelico (2020) found that their teaching performance is significantly impacted by their pedagogical competence, with a high level of competence leading to outstanding teaching efficiency. Another study pointed out that pre-service teachers face difficulties in applying the methods, theory, and training they receive during their teacher education program (Fhaeizdhyall et al., 2018). These findings underscore the need for ongoing support and training for pre-service teachers to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. Moreover, quality pre-service teacher education is realized when effective communication lies at the heart of successful teaching, influencing student engagement, comprehension, and overall learning outcomes. The ability of pre-service teachers to navigate diverse communication scenarios within the realm of education is pivotal. Effective communication is crucial for teachers and pre-service teachers, particularly in their interactions with parents and students. The importance of communicative competencies, especially in speaking and writing, is highlighted in the context of pre-service teaching performance (Cruz, 2019). Transactional communication strategies are also found to have a positive impact on pre-service teachers' speaking skills (Kau & Singh, 2019). These studies collectively underscore the significance of communicative training for teachers and pre-service teachers in enhancing their professional skills and performance.

Communication plays an important role in teaching and learning processes, serving as a fundamental aspect of classroom interactions (Sharma, 2020; Jiménez, 2018). Therefore, there is no doubt that teachers need to develop communication competence throughout their academic careers to become successful in interpreting and creating communicative situations. However, scholars

have reported that pre-service and new teachers often lack the repertoire of teaching strategies and skills needed for their daily practice (Dela Cruz, 2019; Feng & He, 2019). Student teachers encounter difficulties in generalizing their skills and transferring them to the classroom (Martinez & De Vera, 2019). Hence, there is an urgent requirement for courses and programs to help them overcome these deficits. Nowadays, pre-service teachers encounter difficulties enhancing their communicative competence, which affects student learning. Jiao and Zhang (2021) stated that the ability of student teachers in the use of English in the classroom is not enough to sustain them in their lesson presentations and class discussions and thus affects how they answer students' questions and how they ask questions and process students' answers in class during classroom interaction.

In an era characterized by cultural diversity, varying learning styles, and evolving technological landscapes, the skills required for effective communication extend beyond mere linguistic proficiency. Strategic communicative competence encompasses a nuanced blend of verbal and nonverbal strategies, adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and technological adeptness. This competence enables educators to engage students, manage classrooms, resolve conflicts, and convey complex concepts with clarity and precision. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the level of pre-service teachers' strategic competence.

## II. METHODS

The study utilized a mixed-method approach, specifically employing a sequential exploratory design, to delve into the strategic competence of pre-service teachers. Quantitative data were gathered using a descriptive method, which involved administering tests to assess the strategic competence of the respondents. This quantitative analysis aimed to provide a clear measure of the level of strategic competence among pre-service teachers. Additionally, qualitative data were collected through a series of classroom observations and interview sessions. These qualitative methods served to validate and provide context to the results obtained from the quantitative data, offering deeper insights into the factors influencing strategic competence among pre-service teachers. The respondents of the study were first-year pre-service teachers at the University of Saint Louis, a Catholic higher education institution in Northern Philippines.

This study utilized a modified IELTS test on speaking and listening to holistically acquire data necessary to assess students' mastery of strategic competence. Incorporating the IELTS test into the study provided a standardized and objective measure of pre-service teachers' English language proficiency, which serves as a foundational component of their strategic communicative competence. Two interview sessions were conducted to gather qualitative data on pre-service teachers' strategic communicative competence. The process involved all first-year pre-service teachers answering IELTS interview questions to explore their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to strategic communication in educational contexts. Topics covered included their approaches to communication in the classroom, strategies for addressing communication breakdowns, perceptions of their own communicative strengths and weaknesses, and reflections on their training and preparation for teaching. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically to identify patterns and themes aimed at enhancing pre-service teachers' strategic competence.

Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to gather qualitative data on pre-service teachers' strategic communicative competence in real-life educational settings. The process involved trained observers monitoring pre-service teachers during their regular classroom interactions with their teacher. The observers focused on the pre-service teachers' communication behaviors, strategies used, and effectiveness in engaging with students and managing classroom dynamics. Specifically, the teacher observers evaluated how these students communicated and interacted with both their peers and the teacher during their class sessions. Observations focused on various aspects of communication, including verbal and nonverbal communication, adaptability to diverse student needs, clarity of instructions, and responsiveness to student feedback. Data collected through classroom observations were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement in pre-service teachers' strategic communicative competence.

Frequency and Percentage were used to describe the profile of the respondents involved in the study. Additionally, mean scores were used to determine strategic competence of the respondents with the following mean ranges and qualitative descriptions:

Mean Ranges	Qualitative Descriptions
4.21 – 5.00	Highly Competent
3.41 – 4.20	Competent
2.61 – 3.40	Developing
1.81 – 2.60	Limited
1.00 – 1.80	Poor

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	16	59.26
	Female	11	40.74
	Total	27	100.00
Field of Specialization	BPEd	8	29.63
	BEEd	6	22.22
	BSEd English	6	22.22
	BSEd Social Science	7	25.93
	Total	27	100.00
Number of Related Trainings Attended	None	16	59.26
	1 to 2	5	18.52
	3 to 4	6	22.22
	Total	27	100.00

The demographic analysis in Table 1 shows the respondents' profiles in terms of sex, field of specialization, and the number of training sessions attended related to communication skill enhancement. After careful and rigorous interpretation and analysis, the study reveals that the majority of respondents are male, comprising 59.26%, followed by the female group, which accounts for only 40.74% of the total number of respondents. It is also necessary to note that all respondents are first-year education students. In terms of the respondents' field of specialization, they are enrolled in four fields: Physical Education (29.63%), Social Science (25.93%), English (22.22%), and Elementary Education (22.22%). This suggests that the majority of respondents belong to the Physical Education field.

Table 2. Level of Communicative Strategic Competence of the Respondents

Communicative Strategic Competence		
Level	Overall	
	n	%
Highly Competent	2	7.41
Competent	10	37.04
Developing	10	37.04
Limited	5	18.52
Poor		
<b>Overall Mean Performance</b>	<b>3.38 = Developing</b>	

The data presented in Table 2 indicates that the respondents have an overall mean performance score of 3.38, categorizing them at the 'Developing' level in terms of their communicative strategic competence. The result implies that pre-service teachers are in the process of developing their communicative strategic competence, showing some understanding but requiring additional support and training to enhance their skills. The result acknowledges that the level of the respondents' communicative strategic competence is mostly developing. It reveals that respondents have an understanding of the competence, but its application needs improvement, especially during class discussions. Their understanding has been evident in the observations and interviews conducted, where they were assessed on each of the components present in strategic competence. The results of this study generally indicate that pre-service teachers are in the process of developing their communicative strategic competence, showing some understanding but requiring additional support and training to enhance their skills. The results of this study align with recent research, particularly the work of Dela Cruz (2019), which found that pre-service teachers at Dalubhasaan ng Lunsod ng San Pablo exhibited an above-average level of communicative competencies in reading, listening, and writing. However, they only achieved an average level in speaking. This discrepancy highlights a significant area of concern, as speaking is a crucial component of effective communication in educational settings. The study also revealed a weak correlation between pre-service teachers' competencies in listening, reading, and writing and their student teaching performance, while a moderate correlation was found between speaking competencies and teaching performance. This suggests that while pre-service teachers may have a solid foundation in certain aspects of communicative competence, their speaking skills require targeted development to enhance their overall effectiveness as educators.

Further emphasizing the need for improvement, a more recent study investigated the relationship between second language (L2) communication apprehension and the communicative competence of pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers (Amelia, 2024). The findings indicated that many pre-service teachers experience communication apprehension, which can significantly hinder their ability to develop and apply their communicative competence. This apprehension can lead to avoidance

of speaking opportunities, further exacerbating their challenges in this area. The collective findings from these studies underscore the necessity for teacher education programs to implement targeted interventions aimed at enhancing pre-service teachers' communicative strategic competence, particularly in speaking. By addressing the specific barriers identified—such as unfamiliar vocabulary, fluency issues, and communication apprehension—teacher education programs can better equip future educators to communicate effectively in the classroom.

In essence, the research findings indicate that pre-service teachers are in a transitional stage regarding their communicative strategic competence. While they possess a basic understanding of communication principles, there is a clear need for additional support and training, particularly in speaking and overcoming communication apprehension. By providing targeted interventions and opportunities for practice, teacher education programs can help pre-service teachers become more confident and effective communicators. This preparation is essential for their success in the teaching profession, ensuring minimal communication breakdowns during classroom interactions and fostering positive and effective learning outcomes for their students.

**Table 2a. Level of Communicative Strategic Competence of the Respondents for Communicative Strategies**

<b>Level</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Highly Competent	3	11.11
Competent	11	40.74
Developing	9	33.33
Limited	4	14.81
Poor	0	0.00
<b>Overall Mean Performance:</b>	<b>3.28 = Developing</b>	

The data in Table 2a show that the respondents scored an overall mean performance of 3.28 in the Communication Strategies component, which is classified as 'Developing.' This indicates that while the respondents demonstrate some knowledge and application of various communication strategies, they struggle with more complex situations and require additional support and training to enhance their strategic competence in this area. This finding is evident in the following responses of the respondents concerning their language use:

- PST BSED E 1: *"I make sure of using right vocabulary based on my audience and the level of their knowledge with that particular term or word."*
- PST BEED 1: *"I only use the basics, the basic languages when expressing ideas to avoid misunderstanding."*
- PST BSED E1: *"I make sure that I construct sentences without any errors in order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion."*
- PST BSED SS 2: *"Grammar is important to avoid this understanding."*
- PST BSED E 1: *"I usually apply the rules of putting stress, the sandwich method and proper pronunciation" when conversing with classmates.*
- PST BEED 1: *"I am conscious to my grammar and so as to my fluency during presentations and teaching demonstrations."*
- PST BSED SS 1: *"I work on my pronunciation by thorough practice and observation in the in the speaking skills of my classmates."*

The research discussion regarding the Communication Strategy component of pre-service teachers highlights the essential role that effective communication strategies play in enhancing their overall communicative strategic competence. The findings from this study underscore the necessity for pre-service teachers to refine their communication strategies to overcome various challenges, including language barriers, unfamiliar vocabulary, and fluency issues. The results of this study indicate that pre-service teachers are currently at a 'Developing' level in their communicative strategic competence, with an overall mean performance score of 3.38. This classification suggests that while these educators possess a foundational understanding of communication strategies, they require additional support and training to enhance their skills. Effective communication is not merely a desirable trait; it is a cornerstone of successful teaching and learning. The ability to convey information clearly and engage students in meaningful dialogue is critical for fostering an effective learning environment.

Research by Muñoz and Contreras (2018) emphasizes the positive impacts of transactional communication strategies on speaking skills, vocabulary improvement, grammar accuracy, and fluency. These strategies, which include asking for clarification, paraphrasing, and using non-verbal cues, are vital for pre-service teachers as they navigate classroom interactions. The ability to implement these strategies effectively can significantly enhance their interactions with students, allowing for clearer communication and better understanding of complex concepts. The study also highlights the importance of training in oral communication strategies. According to Rachmawaty et al. (2021), training can influence strategy preferences, leading to a greater reliance on non-verbal strategies post-training. This finding is particularly relevant for pre-service teachers, as it suggests that structured training programs

can help them develop a more diverse set of communication strategies, which can be tailored to their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Moreover, the research indicates that while female pre-service teachers tend to outperform their male counterparts in speaking performance, there is no significant difference in the types of strategies used between genders. This insight points to the need for targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by male pre-service teachers in developing their communication skills, while also enhancing the strategies used by all trainees. The thematic analysis aligns with findings from Sadig and De Cat (2019), which reveal that pre-service teachers often struggle with language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary knowledge and grammatical accuracy. These challenges can hinder their ability to communicate effectively with students, emphasizing the need for comprehensive training that focuses on vocabulary development and fluency enhancement.

Table 2b. Level of Communicative Strategic Competence of the Respondents for Interaction Management

Level	n	%
Highly Competent	3	11.11
Competent	10	37.04
Developing	13	48.15
Limited	1	3.70
Poor	0	0.00
<b>Overall Mean Performance</b>	<b>3.51 = Competent</b>	

In terms of the Components in Communicative Strategic competence, it can be seen in Table 2b that the respondents scored 3.51 as their overall mean performance under the Interaction Management component, which indicates that they are Competent. Based on the data gathered, a number of respondents mentioned that they often ask for clarification requests, comprehension checks, paraphrasing, gestures, and self-correction when they fail to comprehend something during class sessions. The results of this study suggest that the respondents are generally proficient in communicative strategic competence, particularly in the Interaction Management component, as they have been categorized under the Competent level. They justified their proficiency through observing turn-taking, topic management, providing feedback, and encouraging participation. This finding is evident in the following responses of the respondents:

PST BEED1: *"I manage interactive exchange of ideas in a proper way. I help other members in constructing their insights and try not to pressure them."*

PST BEED 2: *"I manage turn taking by waiting my time to speak"*

PST BSED E 1: *"I avoid confusion by making sure that I also correct the usage of conjunctions and getting rid of grammatical errors."*

PST BSED SS 1: *"I ensure that the discussion is precise in terms of delivery and quality by clarifying whatever he just said."*

PST BSED E1: *"I usually provide my feedback in the most polite and honest way to avoid sounding shaming or intimidating."*

PST BSED SS 1: *"I usually assist them by checking their tone, clarity, and gestures to easily establish rapport on effective communication, and also I checked their pronunciation and whenever there's a mistake in their pronunciation, I try to correct them."*

PST BPED 2: *"I use encouraging words for them to not be scared of talking their ideas."*

The results of this study indicate that pre-service teachers are generally proficient in the Interaction Management component of communicative strategic competence, with most respondents categorized under the "Competent" level. This proficiency is particularly significant as it reflects their ability to effectively manage interactive exchanges, provide constructive feedback, and encourage active participation among students. The categorization of respondents as "Competent" suggests that they possess a solid understanding of key interaction management strategies, such as turn-taking, topic management, and feedback mechanisms. These skills are essential for creating a conducive learning environment where students feel valued and engaged. The ability to manage interactions effectively allows pre-service teachers to facilitate discussions, clarify misunderstandings, and promote collaborative learning.

Recent studies underscore the importance of interaction management in teacher education. For instance, research by Gacasan and Oliva (2021) found that pre-service teachers can develop substantial interaction skills during their training, with notable growth observed over time. This highlights the potential for teacher education programs to enhance these skills through targeted training and practice. However, the study also noted that while interaction skills may develop, there is a need for additional focus on instructional strategies to ensure that pre-service teachers can translate their interaction management skills into effective teaching

practices. Catalano and Catalano (2015) emphasized the value of analyzing classroom interactions as a reflective practice for pre-service teachers. By examining their own interactions and those of experienced teachers, pre-service teachers can identify areas for improvement and develop more effective interaction management strategies. This reflective approach not only enhances their understanding of interaction dynamics but also fosters a culture of continuous professional development.

Furthermore, Korniyaka (2018) noted differences in classroom management between pre-service and in-service teachers, suggesting that pre-service teachers may benefit from targeted training in interaction management. By focusing on this component during their education, programs can better prepare future educators to create engaging and productive learning environments. This preparation is crucial, as effective interaction management contributes to positive student-teacher relationships and fosters an inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Table 2d. Level of Communicative Strategic Competence of the Respondents for Language Use

Level	n	%
Highly Competent	2	7.41
Competent	8	29.63
Developing	10	37.04
Limited	7	25.93
Poor	0	0.00
<b>Overall Mean Performance</b>	<b>3.14 = Developing</b>	

The data presented in Table 2c shows that the respondents scored an overall mean performance of 3.14 in the Language Use component, which is classified as 'Developing.' This suggests that the respondents face more challenges in using appropriate language, particularly in complex situations, and require targeted training and support to improve their language use skills. This finding is evident in the following responses of the respondents concerning their language use:

PST BSED E 1: *"I make sure of using right vocabulary based on my audience and the level of their knowledge with that particular term or word."*

PST BEED 1: *"I only use the basics, the basic languages when expressing ideas to avoid misunderstanding."*

PST BSED E1: *"I make sure that I construct sentences without any errors in order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion."*

PST BSED SS 2: *"Grammar is important to avoid this understanding."*

PST BSED E 1: *"I usually apply the rules of putting stress, the sandwich method and proper pronunciation" when conversing with classmates.*

PST BEED 1: *"I am conscious to my grammar and so as to my fluency during presentations and teaching demonstrations."*

PST BSED SS 1: *"I work on my pronunciation by thorough practice and observation in the in the speaking skills of my classmates."*

The quantitative results are further supported by the qualitative data gathered through observations and interviews. The majority of the respondents mentioned that they often employ strategies such as asking for clarification requests, comprehension checks, paraphrasing, gestures, and self-correction when they encounter difficulties during class discussions. This classification suggests that pre-service teachers have a foundational understanding of language use strategies; however, they encounter challenges when faced with more complex communicative situations. This finding underscores the importance of language use in the professional development of pre-service teachers, as effective communication is essential for successful teaching and learning.

The 'Developing' classification reflects that while pre-service teachers demonstrate some proficiency in language use, they require further training and practice to enhance their skills. This is particularly relevant in the context of classroom interactions, where effective language use is critical for conveying information, engaging students, and facilitating discussions. The respondents' scores suggest that they may struggle with aspects such as vocabulary selection, grammatical accuracy, and fluency, which can hinder their ability to communicate effectively in diverse classroom settings.

Research by Andeasen et al. (2019) emphasizes the need to enhance both verbal and nonverbal communication skills among pre-service teachers. Effective language use encompasses not only the spoken and written word but also body language, gestures, and facial expressions that contribute to overall communicative effectiveness. The study highlights that pre-service teachers need to develop a comprehensive understanding of how to utilize both verbal and nonverbal cues to enhance their interactions with students. This dual focus is essential for fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment.

Table 3. Test of Significant Difference in the Strategic Competence of the Respondents when Grouped According to their Profile Variables

Groups	Dimensions	t-value / F-value	p-value	Description
Sex	Communication Strategy	0.174	0.863	Not significant
	Interaction Management	-2.470	0.021	Significant
	Language Use	-3.612	0.001	Significant
	Overall	-3.360	0.003	Significant
Field of Specialization	Communication Strategy	1.009	0.407	Not significant
	Interaction Management	0.541	0.659	Not significant
	Language Use	0.383	0.766	Not significant
	Overall	0.446	0.722	Not significant
Number of Trainings Attended	Communication Strategy	0.322	0.728	Not significant
	Interaction Management	1.240	0.307	Not significant
	Language Use	0.917	0.413	Not significant
	Overall	0.583	0.566	Not significant

The findings of this study reveal a significant difference in the communicative strategic competence of pre-service teachers when analyzed according to gender. Specifically, female respondents scored higher than their male counterparts across the dimensions of Interaction Management, Language Use, and the overall result. The female group was classified at a 'Competent' level, indicating a solid understanding and application of communicative strategic competence. In contrast, the male group fell under the 'Developing' level, suggesting a need for further support to enhance their skills.

These results are consistent with recent studies that have explored gender differences in communicative competence among pre-service teachers. A study by Baustista and Del Valle (2021) explores gender differences in communication skills among undergraduate students, where female students generally scored higher in communication-related competencies. Additionally, Pan (2021) discussed the development of communicative competence among pre-service EFL teachers and found significant gender differences, with female teachers often demonstrating higher levels of competence. Another study by Lie et al. (2019) explores how gender influences the development of communicative competence in pre-service language teachers, with findings indicating that female teachers generally exhibit higher competence levels. It underscores the need for targeted support to enhance male teachers' skills.

These studies suggest that reflective practices and pedagogical training can help bridge this gap. Moreover, these studies align with the present study's findings on gender disparities in communicative strategic competence. Finally, teacher training programs should consider developing tailored interventions to support pre-service teachers in enhancing their communicative strategic competence. This could include workshops focused on interaction management and language use.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The first-year pre-service teachers are actively developing their communicative strategic competence, which is essential for their future roles as educators. While they exhibit a foundational understanding of communication principles, particularly in interaction management, there remains a pressing need for further development in communication strategies and language use skills. This gap highlights the importance of targeted support and comprehensive training programs designed to enhance their overall communicative abilities. The study underscores that effective communication is a cornerstone of successful teaching and learning. Therefore, it is crucial for pre-service teachers to prioritize the enhancement of their communication skills as they prepare to enter the teaching profession.

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